

CONDITION REPORT



Lady Beatrice Glenavy (née Elvery)
The Picnic (The Expulsion from Eden)

Conducted by Marc Orion Smith (UCT Student No. SMTMAR055) at Iziko South African National Gallery, April 2016.

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of FIN4058F, Practical Communication, as part of the University of Cape Town's Honours in Curatorship programme, 2016.

*[*This report accompanies a standard Iziko 'CONDITION REPORT – Easel Paintings' form]*

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PRIMARY DETAILS

ARTIST:	Lady Beatrice Glenavy (née Elvery)
TITLE:	<i>The Picnic (The Expulsion from Eden)</i>
MEDIUM:	Oil on canvas
SIGNATURE:	Faint monogram visible bottom right (consult report for additional information)
ACC. NO:	92/397
DATE:	(UNKNOWN)
DIMENSIONS:	690 x 885 mm (framed); 570 x 765 mm (unframed)
FRAME:	Framed in a moulded frame with an 'Old Gold' finish and coat (framer's note)
SOURCE:	The Kay Bequest (1992); Presented by Mrs Marjorie Reynolds
CATEGORY:	Irish painting

SUMMARY AND ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

SUMMARY

The oil on canvas painting *The Picnic (Expulsion from Eden)* by Lady Beatrice Glenavy most apparently contains severe crack formations across nearly the entire surface plane where paint has been applied; presumably on account of the painting canvas having been incorrectly rolled when it was removed, at a presently unknown date, from a secondary support. Nonetheless, the distinct technique of the artist remains apparent and is not reduced by the presence of these widespread crack formations. Neither does the painting's darkened appearance (proportionally accredited to the dark imprimatura layer found below the paint layers) diminish the visual experience of the artwork.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Born in Ireland, Lady Beatrice Glenavy (1881-1968) was the second daughter of Dublin businessman, William Elvery. The artist is known by multiple aliases, namely: Beatrice (Moss) Elvery (maiden name), Beatrice Campbell (married name), and Lady Beatrice Glenavy (title name). She received the latter alias, Lady Beatrice Glenavy, upon her marriage in 1912 to Charles Henry Gordon Campbell, who possessed the title of Lord Glenavy.

Pertaining to her artistic education, Lady Glenavy was a student of art at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin where she received much guidance under the teachings of William Orpen. Marked as a talented artist, Glenavy's career saw her produce multiple paintings, as well as stained-glass designs, sculptures and illustrations.



Images taken of Lady Beatrice Glenavy in October, 1959. She is pictured standing in the studio of her home at Rockbrook House, Rathfarnham, Dublin. Images sourced from the Irish Photo Archive (2016).

CONDITION REPORT

SECONDARY SUPPORT

Primarily, the secondary support appears rather stable and secure, with no apparent signs of having detrimental effects on the primary support or paint layers. The canvas has been stretched over a wooden stretcher consisting of four members. A precise measurement of each member could not be taken due to the covering of each individual member by the canvas. However, the overall dimensions of the members (arranged in a rectangular formation) is as follows: 570 x 765 mm. The thickness of each member measures 17 mm. The members are joined by means of Mortise and Tenon joints. There are seven keys in total with one key top-right presumably missing. The keys are neither tied nor taped.

The presence of empty tack holes along the tacking margin suggests that the secondary support is not the original. There are no visible inscriptions or labels on the secondary support.



Images taken of the back of the unframed artwork to document the appearance of the secondary support immediately visible upon initial inspection. Close-up images have been taken of the corners where the individual members of the secondary support meet and the keys are inserted.



Images taken of the empty tack holes (circled in red) visible along the bottom of the artwork suggesting that the secondary support might not be the original.

PRIMARY SUPPORT

The exact fabric, weave and thread count of the commercially prepared primary support is presently unidentified. The primary support has adequate tension, with the surface plane exhibiting general distortions. The edges of the primary support (painting canvas) contain cracks where the canvas wraps over the secondary support. These cracks have led to minor tears along the edges and in time will lead to greater embrittlement and degradation. The canvas has been attached to the secondary support by means of tacks that are still in a suitable condition. The following inscription appears on the reverse of the canvas, bottom-left: 6376 / 3337. The second number of the sequence is unclear, but appears to be the number 3. The meaning and purpose of these numbers are unknown. Additionally, the back of the primary support contains some minor stains and a light marking line that runs horizontally across the canvas, approximately 115 mm up from the bottom member of the secondary support (measurement taken from inner edge of the secondary support member).

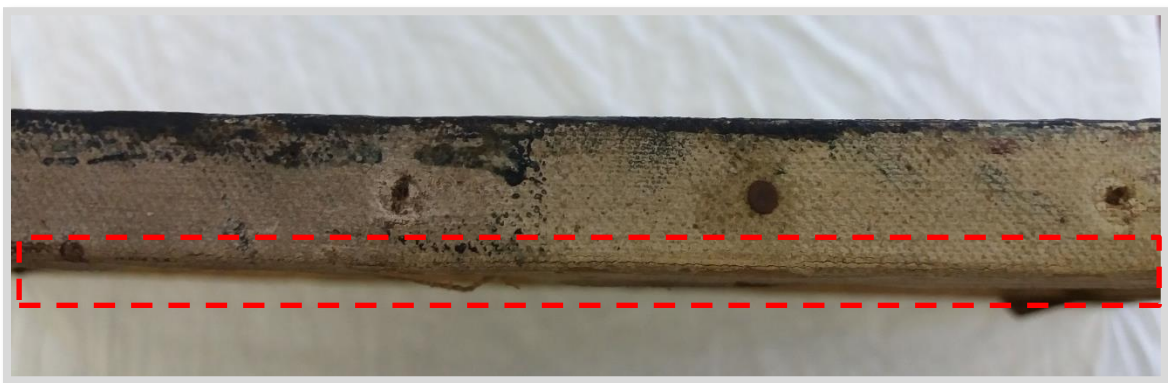


Image taken of the top edge of the artwork exhibiting cracks (outlined in red) in the primary support where the canvas wraps around the edges of the secondary support.

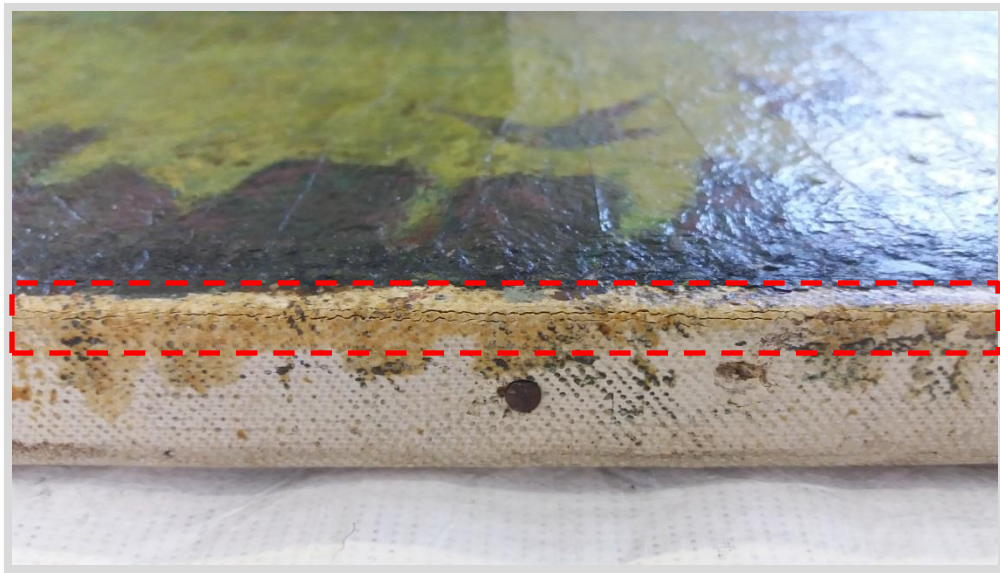


Image taken of the bottom edge of the artwork exhibiting cracks (outlined in red) in the primary support where the canvas wraps around the edges of the secondary support.

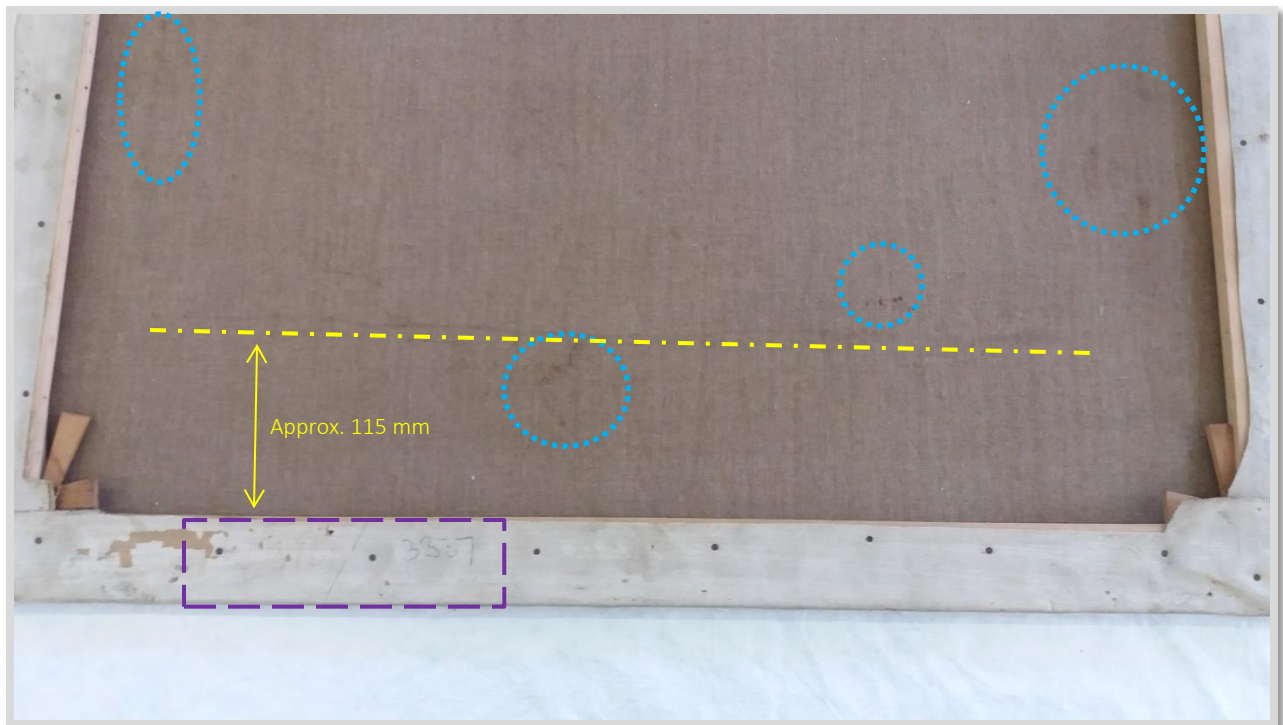


Image taken of the reverse, lower-half section of the artwork exhibiting minor stains (circled in blue), a horizontal marking line (underlined in yellow), and the inscribed number sequence 6376 / 3337 bottom left (outlined in purple).

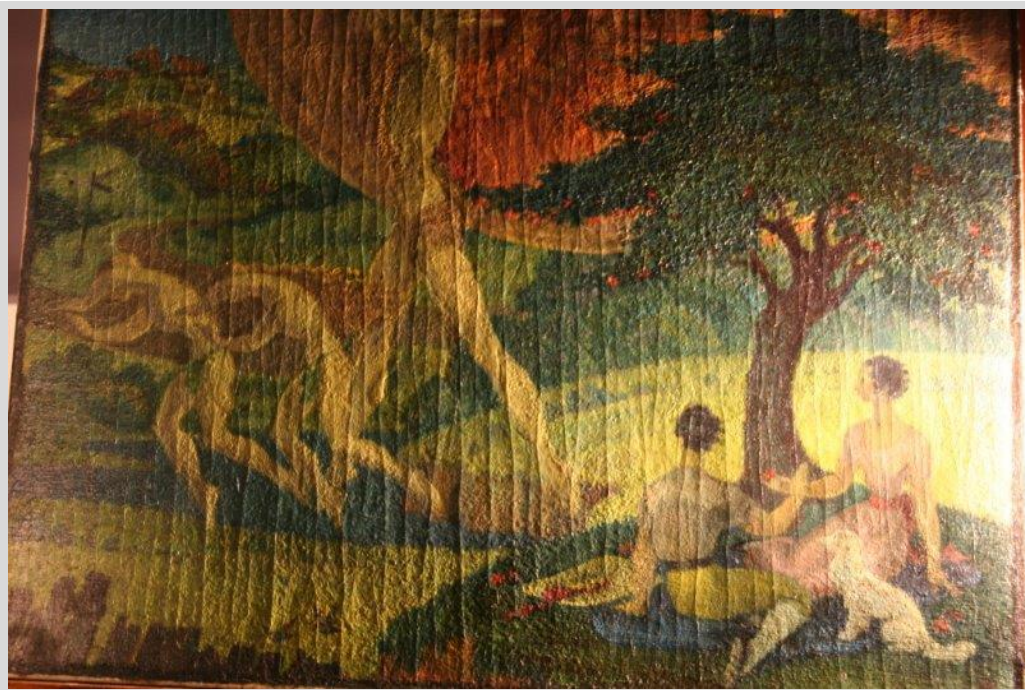
GROUND / PRIMER

The artwork has been executed on a commercially prepared canvas with an associative commercial ground/primer of a cold-white colour. There are no observable signs of loss, damage or restoration.

PAINT LAYER

Immediately apparent in relation to the artwork's overall appearance and paint layers is the excessive presence of various cracks (primarily vertical) that stretch across nearly the entire surface plane, where paint has been applied, in a fairly uniform and parallel arrangement. The presence of these cracks are likely the result of the painting canvas having been incorrectly rolled (i.e. rolled with the painted layer facing inwards and not outwards) at a particular point of time for the purpose of transportation, storage, or the like. These cracks, which appear to align with the canvas weave, also suggest that the canvas has been removed from its secondary support at some stage after the painting was originally completed.

For the purposes of this condition report the painting's frame was removed, after which a site count was conducted with the use of a magnifying glass in order to ascertain the number of cracks visible under minor magnification. After counting, it was observed that an excess of 78 noticeable cracks are present along the top edge of the painting and run down vertically towards the inner segments of the picture plane. Similarly, an excess of 45 noticeable cracks were identified as being present along the bottom edge of the painting and run upwards in a vertical direction towards the inner segments of the picture plane. The darker sections of paint, representing the shade cast by the tree on the right of the painting, exhibit cracks with larger intervals or sections in between them when compared to the lighter areas of paint towards the left of the painting. Collectively, the painting's cracks are most visible under raking light.



Raking light photograph exhibiting the surface typography of the artwork and detailing and highlighting the crack formations found across the artwork's surface plane where paint has been applied. These cracks are likely the result of the painting canvas having been incorrectly rolled after being removed from the secondary support. The use of raking light also emphasises the textured quality of the paint layers.

Another noticeable characteristic of the paint layer is the partially textured quality of the paint that has been applied (visible in the raking light photograph above). In general, the paint appears to be smoothly applied, with a textured quality being produced by means of, and what can best be described as, paint being subtly layered and directly applied in manner veering towards a combination of a layered technique of subtle pointillism and or the partial application of an *impasto* technique. The layering of paint in this manner is most apparent in the detailing of the tree's canopy and trunk, as well as the shaded grass and two human figures situated below it. The application of paint in this manner affords the artwork a distinct aesthetic – one that is reflected in other works by Lady Beatrice Glenavy, some of which can be found in the collection of the Iziko South African National Gallery. The artist also made use of washes in her production process.

Furthermore, the presence of typical age and drying cracks are visible within the paint layer. The artwork has a significantly darkened appearance throughout, which is likely the result of the artist having applied a dark imprimatura layer/glaze to the painting's ground. There are a number of areas where the imprimatura layer has worked through the paint layers applied atop of it and has become visible through the drying cracks present, thereby creating the appearance of grime and surface dirt deposits in numerous areas. The imprimatura layer is visible as a dark, seemingly sticky black residue or stain spot resembling that of brown-black varnish. Areas where such appearances are most visible have been photographically documented. Moreover, due to the presence of painting's dark imprimatura layer it has presently been difficult to ascertain whether the painting has been restored by means of retouching or overpaint, despite examination of the painting underneath ultraviolet (UV) illumination involving the Blacklight Blue (BLB/UVA) method. To this effect, a more specialised, detailed and closer examination of the painting is recommended. In addition, a number of paint losses resulting from abrasions to the upper most layers of paint have also been photographically documented.

The series of images to follow document the conditions and observations of the paint layer as outlined above.

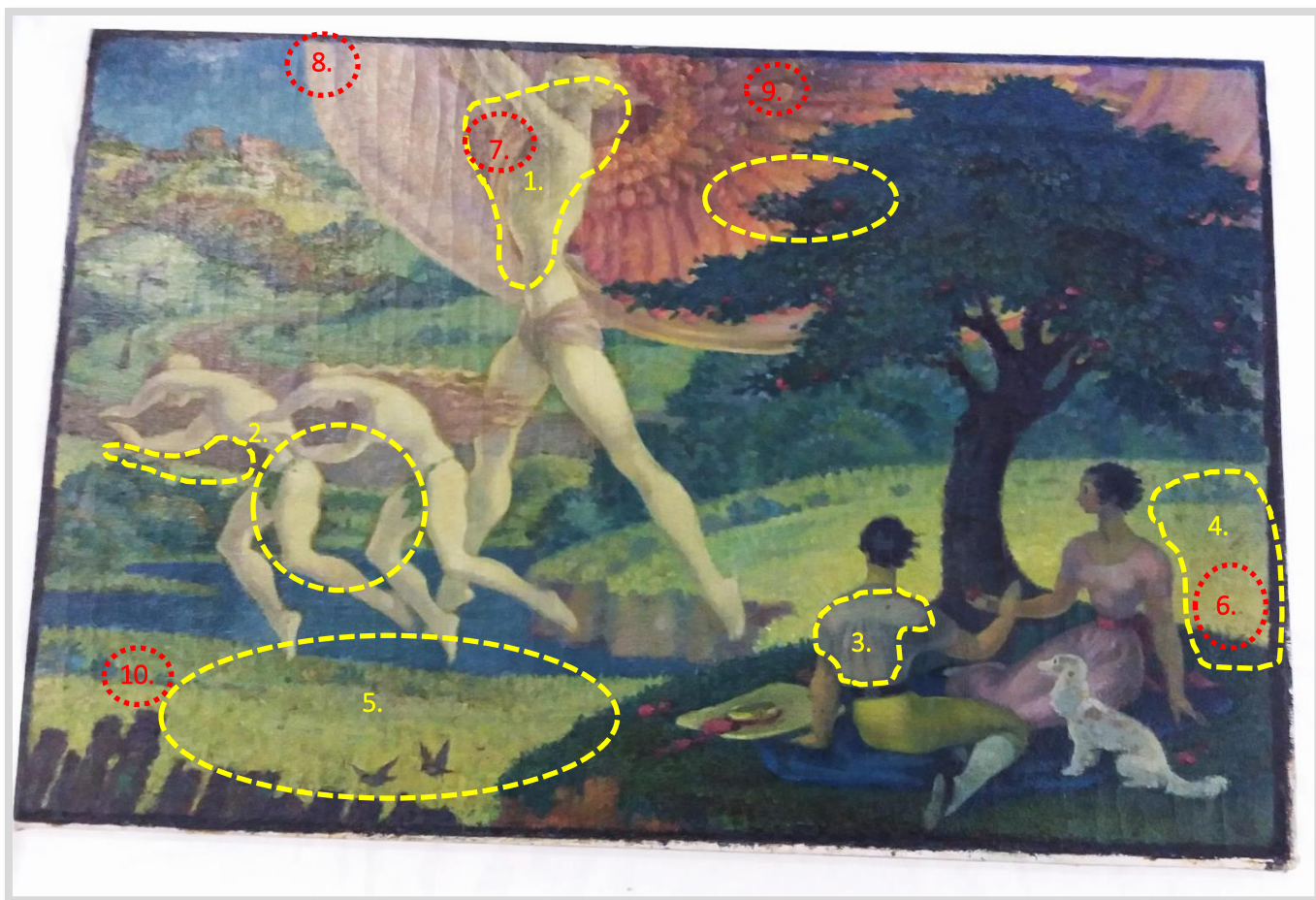
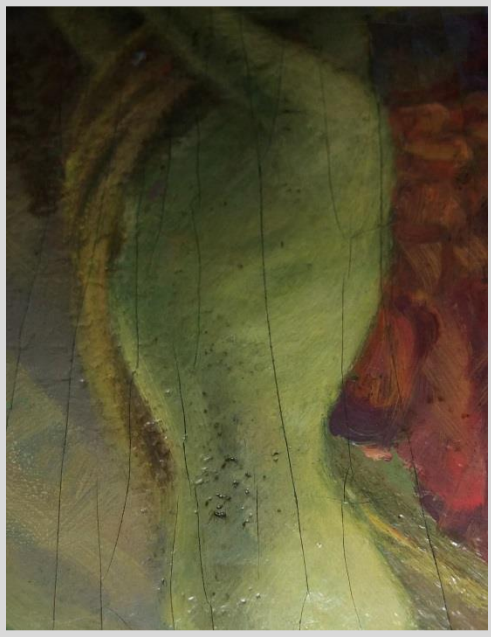
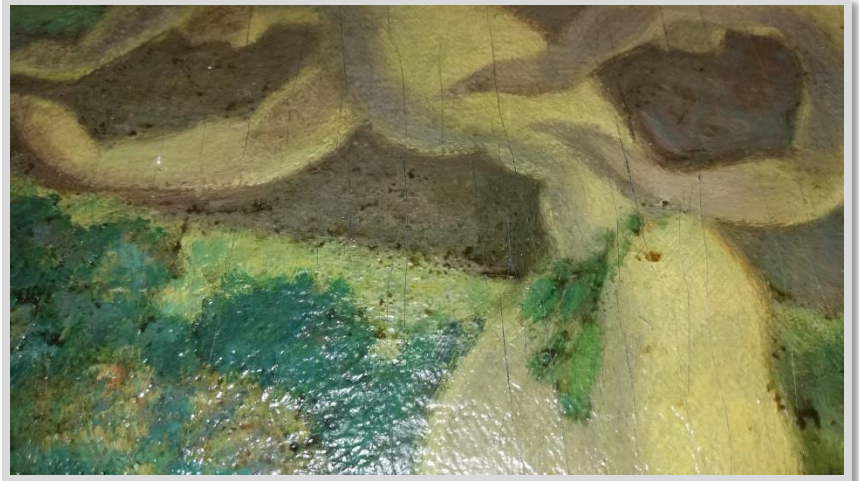


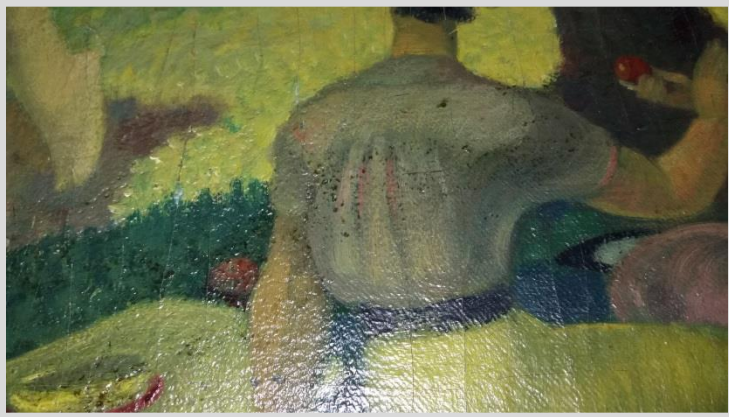
Image mapping the paint layer characteristics and their associated locations: the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer (outlined in yellow) and paint losses/abrasions (outlined in red).



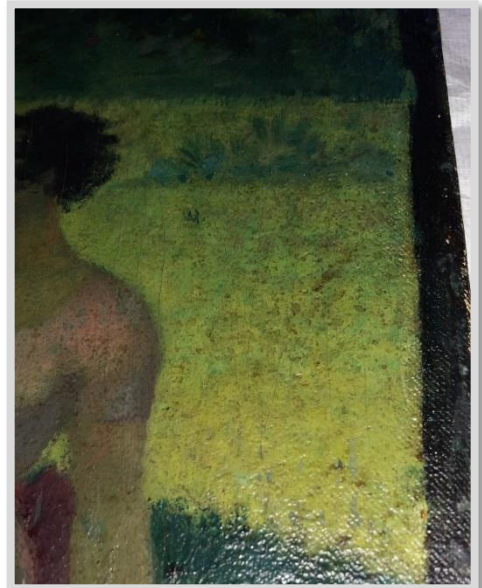
1. Close-up image revealing the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer along the torso of the angel (central figure). The imprimatura layer is visible as a dark, seemingly sticky black residue/stain spot resembling that of brown-black varnish.



2. Close-up image revealing the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer underneath the arms of Adam and Eve (two figures on left-hand side of painting).



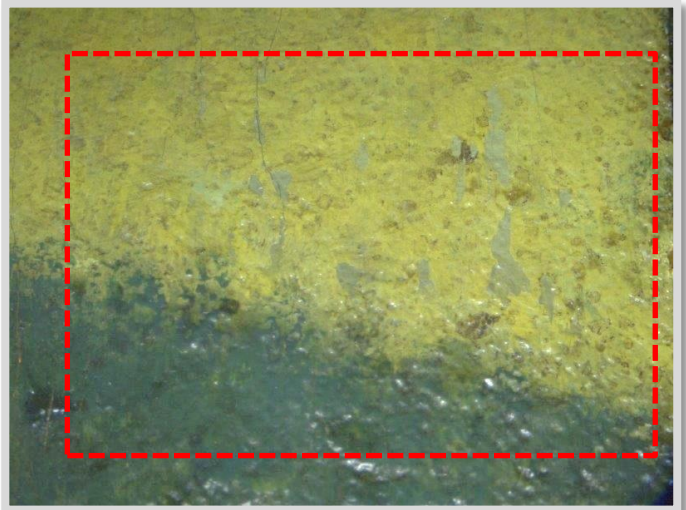
3. Close-up image revealing the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer on the back of the left-hand seated figure underneath the tree.



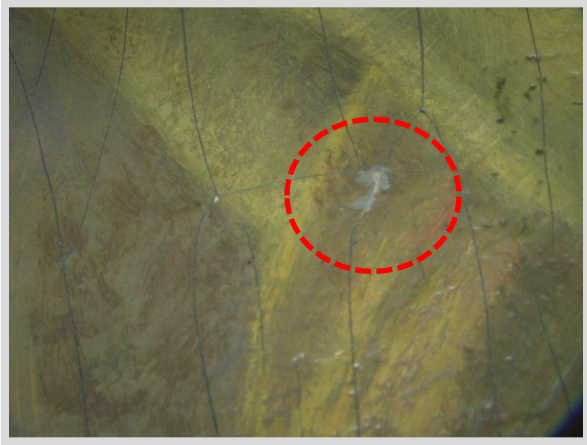
4. Close-up image revealing the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer on the far-right grass embankment.



5. Close-up image revealing the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer along the grass segment beneath the feet of Adam and Eve.



6. Micrograph image (x6.4 magnification) detailing paint losses (outlined in red) of the upper paint layer on the far-right grass segment located slightly above the shaded, darker-green section of grass.



7. Micrograph image (x6.4 magnification) detailing a site of paint loss (circled in red) on the upper torso of the angel figure.



8. Micrograph image (x6.4 magnification) detailing a site of paint loss and abrasion (circled in red) on the upper left-hand segment of the angel's cape.



9. Micrograph image (x6.4 magnification) detailing a site of paint loss and abrasion (circled in red) on the upper, central segment of the angel's wing.



10. Micrograph image (x6.4 magnification) detailing a site of paint loss (circled in red) on the lower, left side segment of the grass embankment.

Image(s) taken under UV illumination



Image taken under UV illumination. It is presently unclear whether or not the darker sections (outlined in yellow in the image below) are due to retouching or overpaint, or whether these sections appear darker on account of the permeation of the dark imprimatura layer located below the paint layers.



VARNISH LAYER

The artwork has been covered with a thin layer of varnish characterised by a light, milky-green sheen (observable by the naked eye under both UV illumination and standard lighting). Again, the presence of the dark imprimatura layer needs to be taken into account as it might well be affecting the colouration of the varnish. In addition, given the current state of the artwork's appearance it is not unfounded to speculate that some of the darker marks and sections might well be due to dirt deposits that have worked themselves into the paint and varnish layers by means of the artwork's numerous cracks or, otherwise, because of the settling of general pollutants onto the painting's surface.

FRAME

The artwork has been framed in a moulded frame with an 'Old Gold' finish (according to the framer's note inscribed on the reverse of the frame), which has been achieved by means of bronze leafing applied over a red bole. The frame's dimensions measure 690 x 885 x 70 mm and has the appearance of a series of five interlocking frames that progressively diminish in size towards the innermost frame.

The broadest segment of the frame has a darkened appearance along the bottom edge. This discolouration is likely due to dust and other domestic pollutants that have repeatedly settled along the frame's lower edge and which have repeatedly been wiped clean during household cleaning or dusting of the frame over the span of several years. Structurally, the frame appears stable and secure with no signs of having a detrimental effect on the artwork. Several cracks, as well as some sites of loss and flaking, are visible in the frame's coating. However, the frame still possesses an acceptable appearance, despite the presence of these damages. The reverse of the frame appears secure and free of any detrimental damage or noticeable characteristics (apart from the framer's inscription 'Old Gold').

The front and reverse of the frame has been photographically documented. Noticeable sites of damage have been detailed.

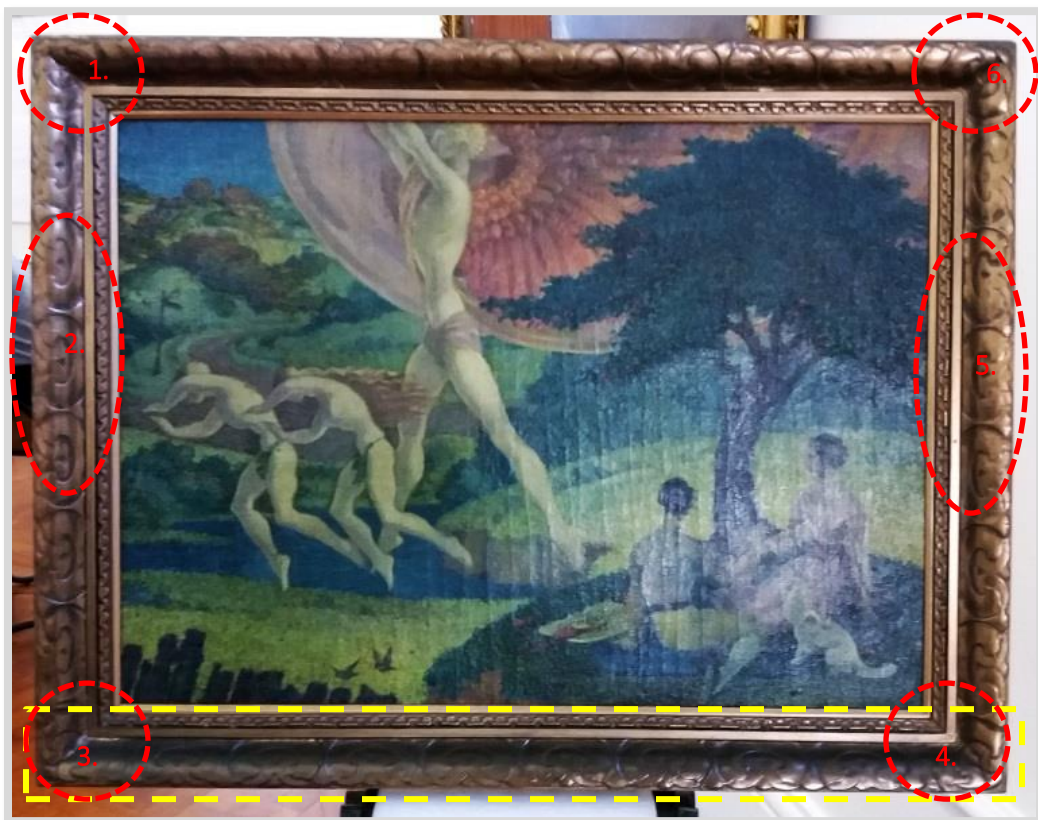


Image detailing the frontal appearance of the frame. Noticeable characteristics and damages have been mapped: darkened discolouration of broadest frame segment (outlined in yellow); cracks and flaking of the frame's coating (outlined in red).



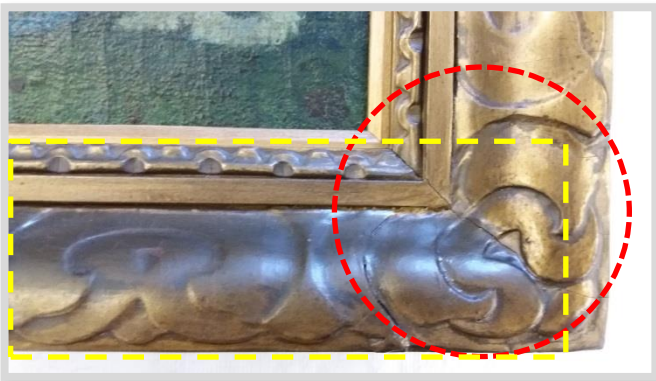
1. Close-up image detailing frame cracks (circled in red) in the upper, left-hand corner.



2. Close-up image detailing frame cracks and coating losses and flaking (outlined in red) on the left side of the frame.



3. Close-up image detailing frame cracks (circled in red) in the lower, left-hand corner of the frame.



4. Close-up image detailing frame cracks (circled in red) in the lower, right-hand corner of the frame. The darkened discolouration of the lower and broadest segment of the frame is also visible (outlined in yellow).



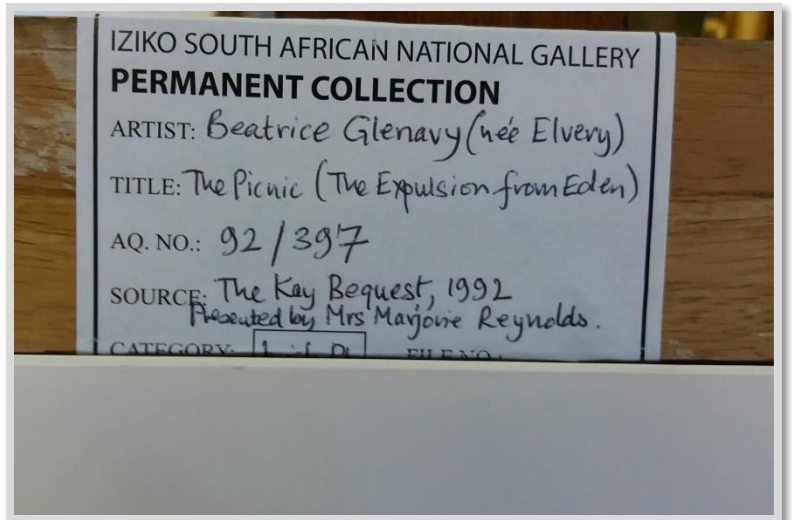
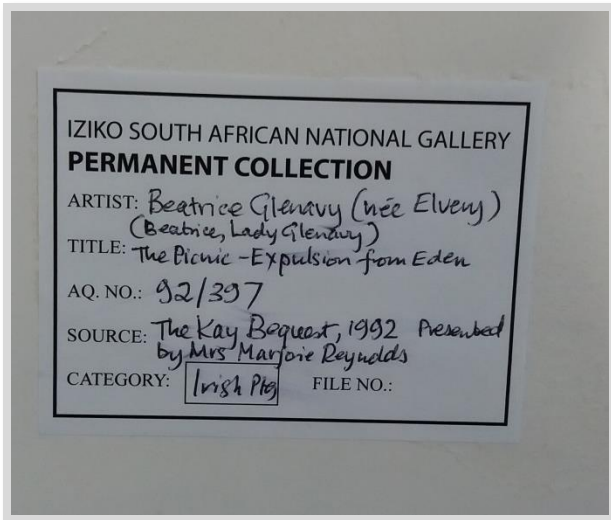
5. Close-up image detailing frame cracks and coating losses and flaking (circled in red) on the right side of the frame.



6. Close-up image detailing frame cracks (circled in red) in the upper, right-hand corner of the frame.



Image detailing the reverse of the artwork's frame at the time of conducting this condition report.

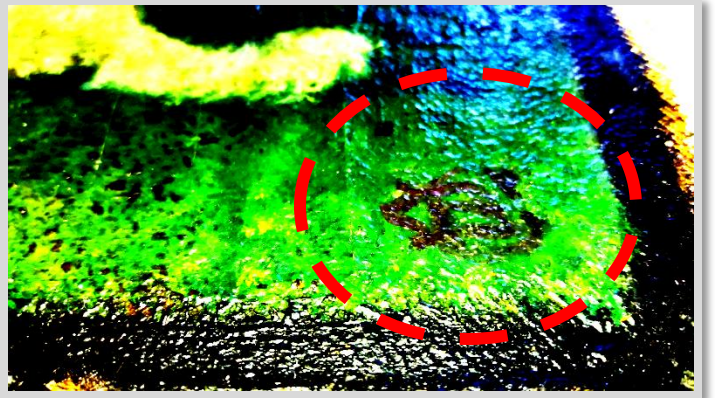
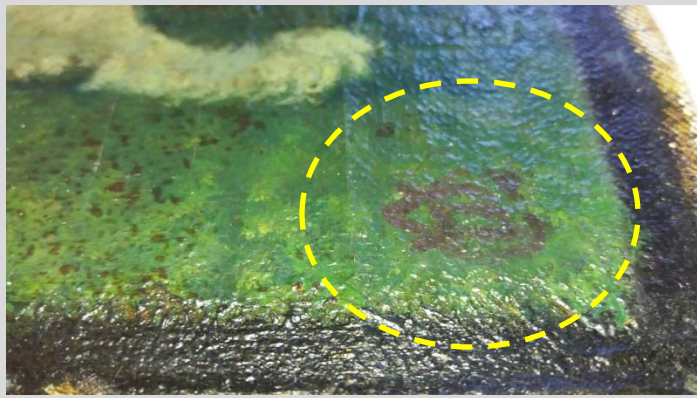


Close-up images detailing the SANG labels on the reverse of artwork at the time of conducting this condition report.

NOTEWORTHY CHARACTERISTICS

MONOGRAM

The artwork features (what appears to be) the monogram BC in the bottom-right corner of the painting. The monogram has been painted in faint, deep-red paint which considerably diminishes the legibility of the monogram. The artist presumably applied the monogram BC on account of her married name, namely that of Beatrice Campbell, after she became the wife of Charles Henry Gordon Campbell, who possessed the title of Lord Glenavy, in 1912.



Close-up images detailing the monogram BC (circled in yellow) in the bottom-right corner of the painting. The image on the left gives a partial indication of the monogram's faint legibility after ample lighting was applied. The contrast levels of the image on the right have been digitally adjusted in order to increase the legibility of the monogram (circled in red).

END OF REPORT